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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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Memorandum

THE NORTH VIETNAMESE CRISIS

Information as of 1300
12 AUGUST 1964

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
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12 August 1964

SC. No. 10443/64

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[redacted]

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SC No. 10443/64

12 August 1964

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

MEMORANDUM: The North Vietnamese Situation

I. CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AS OF 1300 HOURS, 12 August 1964

A. North Vietnamese Military Activity

1. The DRV Navy seems to have resumed normal coastal patrolling. The first activity in the Southern Fleet since the 5 August air strike was noted [redacted]

The extremely low level of activity noted in the Southern Fleet area since the strike suggests that Quang Khe and Vinh were especially hard hit by US aircraft.

2. A [redacted] liaison official in Saigon reports that there were several air raid alerts at Dong Hoi on 9 August, and that the 5 August air strike at Vinh destroyed part of a saw mill in addition to oil storage tanks. In Haiphong, an air raid alert occurred on 5 August, and anti-aircraft firing was heard. No troop movements were seen.

B. Chinese Communist Military Activity

1. Clarification of the report of Chinese soldiers on a train in the Hanoi railway station on 6 August indicates clearly that no major troop movement was involved. [redacted] the original source for the information has now reported that only 10 or 15 junior officers and two or three females in uniform were observed. Their branch of service could not be identified. The group arrived on the regular Peiping-Hanoi train and was met by a civilian reception committee which included women and children. It is possible that the military personnel observed in the Hanoi rail station were in fact Vietnamese, perhaps returning from a trip to China.

[redacted]

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[redacted]

2. There have been no further reflections of the disruption of rail traffic in south China and North Vietnam.

The absence of additional indications of rail congestion may indicate that no unusual military movements by rail are under way.

3.

4. Chinese air transport activity continues between Kunming, Nanning, and Canton, as well as several fields in north China, particularly Changsha.

Changsha is the home of the 18th Fighter Division.

5. Additional information on the previously reported movement of Chinese air defense personnel to Nanning indicates that an entire air army headquarters was involved. Chinese air armies are primarily command and administrative units that provide ground control intercept (GCI) operators, radio and radar specialists, and logistic personnel. This particular organization--the 7th air army--was drawn from the sensitive Taiwan Strait area, which suggests that the Chinese have assigned high priority to the Sino-Vietnamese border area. The timing of the move, 5-7 August, does not permit us to determine if it resulted directly from the 5 August air strike, or was part of a previously planned air defense build-up in south China, but we believe the latter explanation is more likely at this time.

6. Very little flight activity by fighter aircraft based on Hainan Island and coastal airfields in south China has been reported since about 9 August.

[redacted]

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No extended overwater flights have been reported since 4 August, [redacted]

7. The North, East and South Sea Fleets continue to engage in routine operations. There have been no indications of intent to deploy units to the Hainan Island/Gulf of Tonkin area. Nor has there been any change in the operations of the South Sea Fleet PT boat force [redacted]

Presently the disposition of PT boats in the South Sea Fleet area consists of one squadron (12 to 15 boats) near Swatow, one squadron at Chinglan on the north side of Hainan Island, and another one at Yulin on the south side.

8. [redacted]

C. US Activity

1. In view of the presence of jet fighters in North Vietnam, the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific, has authorized Yankee Team (low level reconnaissance of Laos) escort aircraft to arm for air-to-air combat. This applies especially to areas where DRV aircraft could be expected to cross the border into Laos.

[redacted]

II. OTHER COMMUNIST REACTIONS

A. Chinese propaganda concerning the Tonkin Gulf crisis continues along established lines. No major new statements have been issued. Peiping announced on 11 August, that "popular" demonstrations against the US have now involved more than 20 million people.

B. [redacted]

[redacted]

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